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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 003022

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO, USAID
FOR KUNDER/MCCLOUD/BORODIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: MGGZ01 - ISRAELI GAZA INCURSION - JERUSALEM JULY
18 SITREP

REF: JERUSALEM 03001

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The Rafah crossing opened July 18 to allow 2,000-3,000 Palestinians on the Egyptian side of the crossing to enter Gaza. Palestinian contacts report that more than 700 Palestinians transited into Gaza as of 1300 local. The IDF July 18 withdrew from parts of Beit Hanoun following its July 17 incursion. Qassam rockets continue to fall in or near Israeli population centers, resulting in some light injuries and property damage. In the West Bank, the IDF is conducting operations in Nablus and Qabatiyah village. Palestinian President Abbas (Abu Mazen) is scheduled to return to Gaza on July 18 for meetings with Hamas PM Isma'il Haniyyah. The Karni/al-Mintar and Nahal Oz crossings are open July 18.

Rafah Crossing

¶2. (C) According to USAID Gaza-based Field Staff, the Rafah crossing opened at 0945 local July 18 to begin processing Palestinians on the Egyptian side to enter Gaza. Rafah crossing remains closed for departures from Gaza to Egypt. There are an approximate 2,000-3,000 Palestinians awaiting transit, and crossing officials estimate that more than 700 transited by 1300 local. Crossing officials may request additional time beyond the 1800 local scheduled closing to process all those seeking transit.

Military Developments

¶3. (SBU) The IDF July 18 pulled out of Beit Hanoun following its incursion into the town's western sectors. At least two Palestinian gunmen died and five others were wounded in the fighting. An additional seven Palestinians were injured during the IDF withdrawal. Three IDF soldiers sustained injuries from an anti-tank missile fired by Palestinian gunmen. Israeli media reports cited Palestinian claims that the IDF caused heavy damage to houses, farmland, and water pipelines during the operation.

¶4. (SBU) A least seven Qassam rockets were launched from northern Gaza toward Ashkelon, Sderot, and the Western Negev on July 17, resulting in injuries from shrapnel to at least

one Israeli and damage to property. Both PIJ and the PRC claimed responsibility for the rocket fire. An additional two Qassam rockets were fired toward the Western Negev at 0900 local, July 18, but no damage or injuries were reported.

¶15. (SBU) In the West Bank, the IDF July 18 initiated a second incursion into Nablus in as many days, taking positions inside the center of the city and near the casbah (market). Sporadic gunfire is reported, and at least three Palestinians sustained wounds in clashes. The IDF has thus far arrested eight Palestinians in this operation. At 1300 local, July 18, the IDF initiated an incursion into Qabatiyah village near Jenin and imposed a curfew in anticipation of conducting arrests. The IDF July 18 also arrested two National Security Forces members near Qalqilya.

¶16. (C) Israeli police July 17 prevented a possible suicide bombing in Jerusalem with the arrest of a Palestinian carrying a five-kilogram explosive device near Jerusalem's municipal buildings. Israeli security officials believe the Palestinian originated from the Nablus area. (Comment: The attempted bombing in Jerusalem may explain increased IDF activity in the northern West Bank. End comment.)

¶17. (SBU) Following the July 16 killing of Preventive Security Organization officer Muhammad Zaki Dahlan (reftel), al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades gunmen from Khan Younis shot and seriously wounded a Hamas military wing activist. In a separate incident, al-Aqsa gunmen in Abasan near Khan Younis opened fire at the home of a Hamas member. One Hamas activist and two al-Aqsa gunmen were wounded in the exchange of gunfire.

Political Developments

¶18. (C) According to Palestinian contacts in the president's office, Abu Mazen is planning a 3-4 day visit to Gaza. Abu Mazen is expected to meet with Hamas PM Isma'il Haniyyah to discuss developments regarding the kidnapped Israeli soldier and prospects for the formation of a National Unity Government (NUG). Abu Mazen is insisting that a NUG will only be formed following a resolution to the latest crisis.

¶19. (SBU) Approximately 1,700 Palestinians, organized by the National and Islamic Force Coordination Committee, demonstrated through the streets of Ramallah on July 17 to protest ongoing Israeli military action in Lebanon and Gaza. The protesters denounced the Arab and international community for its failure to stop "Israeli aggression," and expressed their support for Hezbollah. Approximately 4,000 protesters marched through Gaza City on July 17 to the offices of the International Red Cross and UN headquarters to demand the release of Palestinian prisoners. Additional demonstrations are anticipated, including a "Day of Rage" demonstration by National and Islamic Factions following Friday prayers on July 21.

AMCIT Update

¶110. (C) Post is facilitating the departure of approximately 160 American citizens from Gaza, tentatively scheduled for July 19, via Erez crossing.

Humanitarian Update

¶111. (SBU) Crossings: The Kerem Shalom and Sufa crossings remain closed. The Karni/al-Mintar commercial crossing opened July 18 at 1230 local following a delay due to ongoing IDF operations nearby, according to PalTrade Gaza-based official Mohammed Skaik. The Karni crossing July 17

processed 164 inbound truckloads, mainly food, according to Skaik. The Nahal Oz fuel transfer station is operational on July 18.

¶12. (SBU) Electricity: According to USAID Gaza-based field staff, nine of the ten medium-tension electricity feeder lines into Gaza are operational on July 18. The medium-tension feeder line into Rafah located near Gaza's Dahaniya airport was damaged early on July 18, thereby cutting most of Rafah City's electricity.

WALLES